

The History of NCI Herne Bay



The idea of establishing a National Coastwatch Institution station at Herne Bay in Kent was first mooted in 1998 when it was hoped to use the old coastguard lookout at Bishopstone. Unfortunately, Canterbury City Council demolished the building in 1999. Soon afterwards the council offered the NCI the use of the cupola above the bandstand, but this proved to be an unsuitable location and the offer was declined.

The team at Herne Bay used a local shop selling second-hand furniture to raise funds for a new station by donations and subscriptions. In October 2000 the Herne Bay team moved to their current premises on the top floor of the Victorian public toilet block known as the Old Bathing Station. Before the NCI took up residence, it had been used as a cafe as well as storage space so had electricity and running water which was very helpful.

The members of NCI Herne Bay started a massive clean-up operation, and by 2001 a telephone line had been installed along with a toilet, kitchen area and double glazing. NCI Herne Bay was now up and running with full watches and training taking place.

In 2005, the building was sold by Canterbury City Council and ever since the station have had a lease agreement with the current owners. In 2010 NCI Herne Bay was awarded Declared Facility Status, which is a requirement to meet the local search and rescue standards, and is assessed annually to ensure that the standard is maintained. This assessment usually involves an NCI recognised assessor observing the station in operation and sometimes



involves Whitstable lifeboat being launched in order to carry out various exercises with the watchkeepers.

The station was given a major internal refurbishment in September 2014 which included laying new carpet throughout. The station now has a watchroom fitted out with a range of equipment including radar, AIS and radios along with a training area with charts and a comprehensive range of computer-based training programs. The station is situated 20 ft above sea level and has a 180-degree visual area covering from Herne Bay Neptune's Arm round to Reculver Towers.